



RHODE ISLAND WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

March 4th, 2021

Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

I write to express the strong support of the Rhode Island Working Families Party for Rep. Slater's bill H. 5012 which mandates safe staffing ratios in nursing homes.

Everyone knows that caregivers in nursing homes have been doing particularly dangerous and particularly important work in the past year. People are quick to call them heroes, but have been slow to listen to them about what their jobs are actually like and what they need to make them safe. I urge this committee to treat these workers like the experts they are on nursing home care and follow their lead to making nursing homes safer for residents and staff alike.

Even before the pandemic there were clear safety reasons to set a staffing ratio that guarantees caregivers won't be overworked and residents won't be under served. Rhode Island falls at a dismal 41st in the country on staffing ratios, and now we've seen the deadly consequences of not having a reasonable staffing standard. Rhode Island is only one of three states with 70% or more of its COVID deaths coming from nursing homes. That isn't an accident: a new study from researchers at Harvard shows that nursing homes with better staffing ratios had fewer COVID deaths.¹ Put another way: by cutting costs to boost profits nursing homes have been putting residents at risk. It is time for that to change—right now.

We hope this committee will heed the call of frontline caregivers and pass this bill swiftly.

Sincerely,

Georgia Hollister Isman
Rhode Island Working Families Party

¹ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2769437?alert=article>